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836 II. His sister married Gecha Harma of Udala Tondawada, and at the wedding he met Harma's sister Gecha Kowe, and danced with her. They liked each other, and met at other weddings and at koqsar dances, and had sexual intercourse two or three times, which Moda said was necessary in order to ascertain that they were both physically capable. Everyone saw that they were in love, and their wedding followed as soon as the necessary betrothal ceremonies could be completed. But if pre-marital intercourse results in pregnancy, there can be no formal marriage, which the Hill Marias call *marmi* and the Bison-horn *pendul*; the girl states the name of the man responsible, and goes to live in his house without any ceremony, the union being described as *ottur* ('taken away'). A child born to a girl without even *ottur* would be considered as belonging to the clan of the man whom the mother names as the father; and this putative father would be expected to take the mother and child to his house, the union being known to the Hill Marias as *ahene-hatta* ('thus-went'). No stigma attaches to such unions, and the children have exactly the same position and rights as the children of a formal marriage.

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584 Hill Maria parents do not try to interfere in their children's choice of wives and husbands. When a youth and his girl know their minds, each tells his or her parents. Then the youth's parents, with the elders of the village, go, without the youth, with about a rupee's worth of *mahua* spirit (or five bottles) to the girl's parents, taking care to arrive at their house at about four or five o'clock in the afternoon. The father of the youth opens the door of the girl's house, places the liquor bottles inside the threshold and rejoins his party, all of whom sit silent outside the door. The girl's parents then call in some of the elders of their village, and in their presence tell the girl that this liquor has been brought on her account, and ask her if she is willing to go and live with the youth in the village from which the liquor has come. If the girl agrees, the liquor is at once drunk by the parties from the two villages, and the girl's parents entertain the visiting party to supper; if she refuses, the youth's parents take the liquor back to their village. This ceremony is called *talq-da'ina* ('going to ask'). It may take place on any day of the year, Hill Marias recking nothing of auspicious days or omens.

Hill Maria regular betrothal and marriage

[787]

There is a second *talq-da'ina*, generally after an interval of about a year; it sometimes takes place sooner, but it is considered bad form to be too importunate. The youth does not go with his parents even this time; he does not, indeed, meet his betrothed between the first *talq-da'ina* and marriage, as, once a girl's hand

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husband ill-treated her, while she provided a chorus of simulated wailing. They took her off to the booths prepared for her parents and the guests from her village, and sat there with her for the rest of the morning and all the afternoon, taking their food there, while the rest of the guests finished the *landa* and slowly dispersed, beating their drums, along the forest paths. At about 5.30 p.m. the bridegroom entered the bridal hut alone, while his younger brother went to the booth where the bride had spent the afternoon, cried 'Come, sister-in-law, it is time that you were bedded,' caught her by the hand and tried to drag her off. She screamed and feigned resistance, but he called four or five other laughing youths to help him, and between them they pulled the girl to the door of the bridal hut, opened it and pushed her in, barring the door on the outside. Then they stole a cock from the bridegroom's coop, and, accompanied by the girls who had come with the bride from her village, plucked the cock and scattered its feathers along a path leading to a forest glade, where they cooked and ate it, and all dispersed. 585

The *ottur* and *akeushattu* forms of marriage among the Hill Marias have already been mentioned; the same forms exist among the Bison-horn Marias. Actually women are very free to change their attachments or, if unattached, to go to the house of the man of their choice and live with him as his wife even if he is already married. It is convenient for the man to have the services of an extra woman in a society in which so much work is done by women; and it is not considered right for a nubile woman to be unattached. Particularly among the Bison-horn Marias, men with two or three wives are common; only one of these will be a regularly married wife, and the others will be either her younger sisters or parallel-cousins or other women who have come into the husband's keeping of their own choice, or after becoming pregnant as a result of a liaison with him. The expression commonly used by the Bison-horn Marias for a woman going in this way to live with a man is the local and Chhattisgarhi Hindi term *paisa-mundi*, and the unions are known as *paithu* or *odiyattur*; there seems to be no difference between these, just as for practical purposes there is little between the *ottur* and *akeushattu* forms of the Hill Marias. Where an unmarried woman is made pregnant, and becomes the man's wife by living at his house, the man has to give his fellow-clansmen an entertainment (*paithu*) or dinner, and pay the usual bride-price. Husbands have similarly to give a dinner when unmarried girls, wives or widows, of their own choice and without their guardians' consent, go to live with him; but in such 589

Irregular marriages, widow marriages and divorce; attitude to abnormalities

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588 cases there is no bride-price, though the deserted husband can claim from the new husband the bride-price which he paid when he married the woman, a *gudapal* cousin can claim Rs. 5 compensation if an unmarried girl goes to some other man, and a younger brother of the dead husband can claim Rs. 5 compensation if a widow goes to a new husband. Sometimes when parents or parties to a marriage are very poor and cannot afford the expense of a regular wedding they merely start to live together in this way, either performing the marriage ceremony later when they have had time to collect the means required, or else distributing tiny cakes to their clan-fellows instead. The term *aghmirtur* or *armirtur* is sometimes applied to the elopement of an unmarried girl or a wife with another man.

583 *Poyse'othur* or marriage by capture still occurs, though getting rarer every year. We have seen how, when a girl remains unmarried her parents will arrange for her cross-cousin to carry her off; and in the Bison-horn *pendul* regular marriage described above there is an element of marriage by capture in the way in which the bride feigns resistance when the bridegroom's party begins to escort her to his village and when she is finally parted from the girls of her own village with a show of force by the bridegroom's younger brother and his friends. In fact, the Hill and Bison-horn Maria custom of the bride being taken off from her native village to the bridegroom's village and of the wedding taking place there may be a survival of a former general custom of marriage by capture. When the girl is unmarried and is carried off by her cross-cousin at her parents' request, they usually explain matters to her as she is being carried off and advise her to make the best of it. I found only one Bison-horn Maria who admitted having really captured his wife in the good old way once so prevalent in the Killepal, Dantewara, Pharaspal, Kuakonda and Aranpur *parganas*, probably in the whole of the Bison-horn country. He was reticent about the whole affair, though apparently the girl had been willing to marry him, but her parents had objected. According to old records the practice was for the villagers of the girl's village to beat the invading party of youths until it had crossed the village boundary with the girl; Russell and Hiralal (III, p. 79) state that the women only used to beat the invaders in this way, the invaders making no effort to retaliate, and the marriage being completed by the gift of a cloth to the girl on arrival in the captor's village and a *landa* carousal by the invading party.

587 Widow marriage is common among all Marias. In the hills, widows usually go to their husband's younger brothers without any